

APPENDIX 8. ACEC CRITERIA

As part of the process for developing the Jack Morrow Hills Coordinated Activity Plan (JMH CAP), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) planning team reviewed all BLM-administered public lands in the planning area to determine whether any areas should be considered for designation as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). Four existing ACECs were not reviewed to determine whether any existing ACEC designations should be modified or terminated, as this task was accomplished and documented through the Green River Resource Management Plan (RMP). The Steamboat Mountain ACEC was reviewed and considered for removal or termination in Alternative 2 of the EIS. Only BLM-administered public lands (i.e., public land “surface”) can be considered for ACEC designation.

Three potential new ACECs, and three potential expansions to existing ACECS were identified and addressed during the Jack Morrow Hills CAP planning effort.

Of the 6 areas and expansions reviewed, the BLM-administered lands on five areas were found to not need the special management emphasis of an ACEC designation and were dropped from further consideration. Expansion of one area, the Steamboat Mountain ACEC, was recommended. The BLM-administered lands on the five existing ACECs within the JMH CAP planning area, including the Steamboat Mountain ACEC, were retained. Appendix 1 in the Green River RMP contains a listing of the existing ACECs for the entire Green River RMP area (currently the Rock Springs Field Office).

To be eligible for designation as an ACEC, an area must meet the relevance and importance criteria described in 43 CFR 1610.7-2 and BLM Manual 1613.

Relevance and importance are defined as follows:

- **Relevance:** There shall be present a significant historic, cultural, or scenic value; a fish or wildlife resource or other natural system or process; or natural hazard.
- **Importance:** The above-described value, resource, system, process, or hazard shall have substantial significance and values. This generally requires qualities of more than local significance and special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern. A natural hazard can be important if it is a significant threat to life or property.

RELEVANCE

An area meets the relevance criterion if it contains one or more of the following:

1. A significant historic, cultural, or scenic value (including, but not limited to, rare or sensitive archeological resources and religious or cultural resources important to Native Americans)
2. A fish and wildlife resource (including, but not limited to, habitat for endangered, sensitive, or threatened species, or habitat essential for maintaining species diversity)

3. A natural process or system (including, but not limited to, endangered, sensitive, or threatened plant species; rare, endemic, or relic plants or plant communities that are terrestrial, aquatic, or riparian; or rare geological features)
4. Natural hazards (including, but not limited to, areas of avalanche, dangerous flooding, landslides, unstable soils, seismic activity, or dangerous cliffs). A hazard caused by human action may meet the relevance criteria if it is determined through the resource management planning process to have become part of a natural process.

IMPORTANCE

An area meets the importance criterion if it meets one or more of the following:

1. More than locally significant qualities that give it special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern, especially compared to any similar resource
2. Qualities or circumstances that make it fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable, exemplary, unique, endangered, threatened, or vulnerable to adverse change
3. Recognized as warranting protection to satisfy national priority concerns or to carry out the mandates of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA)
4. Qualities that warrant highlighting to satisfy public or management concerns about safety and public welfare
5. Poses a significant threat to human life and safety or to property.

Table A8-1 shows the areas that were identified in the review, and the BLM relevance and importance determinations that were made.

The Green River RMP interdisciplinary team identified potential expansions for two of the existing ACECs, to be addressed during the JMH CAP planning effort.

Based on the criteria, expansions were reviewed for two areas. The existing ACECs were not reevaluated. One of the proposed expansions would add an additional species to the existing Special Status Plant Species ACEC. The other expansion would add the wildlife habitat and migration corridors of the core area to the Steamboat Mountain ACEC.

Table A8-1. Evaluation of ACEC Relevance and Importance Criteria

Existing or Proposed ACECs	Relevance Criteria (resources)	Importance Criteria	Recommended	Comments
BASIN BIG SAGEBRUSH/LEMON SCURFPEA (Outside Steamboat Mountain ACEC Proposed Expansion Area)	Criterion 3	Criteria 1, 2	No	<p>Listed in Wyoming Natural Diversity Database (WYNDD) reports as rare and unique and worth special protection; fragile habitat; used extensively by a desert elk herd. Meets the relevance criteria for natural processes or systems. Meets the importance criteria for more than locally significant qualities that give the area special distinctiveness, and cause for concern because of qualities that make the area fragile, sensitive, rare, and vulnerable to adverse change.</p> <p>Compared to the Steamboat Mountain ACEC proposed expansion area, the vegetative habitat outside the proposed expansion area does not need equal special management emphasis. See discussion of the expansion of the Steamboat Mountain ACEC.</p>
CUSHION PLANT COMMUNITY	Criteria 2, 3	Criteria 1, 2, 3	No	<p>Listed in WYNDD reports as fragile, unique, and worth special protection. Is also a special habitat used by the mountain plover, a BLM Sensitive species. Meets the relevance criteria for wildlife resource and natural processes or systems. Meets the importance criteria for more than locally significant qualities that give the area special distinctiveness and cause for concern because of qualities that make it fragile and vulnerable to adverse change, warranting protection to satisfy national priority concerns and to carry out the mandates of FLPMA.</p> <p>The area can be effectively managed through the proposed management decisions that cover this area without the need for special management emphasis or ACEC designation.</p>

Table A8-1. Evaluation of ACEC Relevance and Importance Criteria

Existing or Proposed ACECs	Relevance Criteria (resources)	Importance Criteria	Recommended	Comments
PALEOSOL DEPOSITION AREA (proposed Greater Sand Dunes ACEC expansion)	Criteria 1, 3	Criteria 1, 2	No	<p>Meets the relevance criteria for significant cultural resources; eligible for inclusion in National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under Criteria D (36 CFR 60) for scientific information presence and potential. The archeological and geological deposits are relevant for the study of environmental change during the transition from the Pleistocene to the Holocene geological age and the study of human adaptation to these natural systemic changes over time. Meets the importance criteria for scientific qualities pursuant to nationally significant issues in archeological science. The circumstances (e.g., archeological and geological strata) of these qualities are fragile, sensitive, rare, exemplary, unique, and irreplaceable. The archeological and geological deposits from the Pleistocene to Holocene transition are unique and in an excellent state of preservation.</p> <p>Considering that the real values of these deposits can only be determined through careful scientific excavation, the legal and regulatory requirements for those activities and the proposed management prescriptions for the area are sufficient to effectively manage the area. Special management emphasis or ACEC designation is unnecessary.</p>
PINNACLES GEOGRAPHIC AREA	Criteria 1, 3	Criteria 1, 2	No	<p>Meets the relevance criteria for significant scenic value and natural processes or systems. Meets the importance criteria for more than locally significant qualities and for qualities that make the area fragile, sensitive, rare, and vulnerable to adverse change.</p> <p>The proposed management prescription for the area is sufficient to effectively manage the area, and special management emphasis or ACEC designation is unnecessary.</p>

Table A8-1. Evaluation of ACEC Relevance and Importance Criteria

Existing or Proposed ACECs	Relevance Criteria (resources)	Importance Criteria	Recommended	Comments
<p>SPECIAL STATUS (CANDIDATE) PLANT SPECIES (Proposed Expansion)</p> <p>Large-fruited bladderpod (<i>Lesquerella macrocarpa</i>)</p> <p>Nelson's milkvetch (<i>Astragalus nelsonianus</i>)</p> <p>Meadow pussytoes (<i>Antennaria arcuata</i>)</p>	Criterion 3	Criteria 1, 2, 3	No	<p>Meets the relevance criteria for natural processes or systems. Meets importance criteria for more than locally significant qualities; fragile, sensitive, rare, vulnerable to adverse change; and warrants protection to satisfy national priority concerns and carry out the mandates of FLPMA.</p> <p>Populations of this plant are found outside the planning area. The status of this plant has not changed since completion of the Green River RMP. The management prescriptions in the Green River RMP are sufficient to provide the needed protection for these species, and special management emphasis or ACEC designation is unnecessary.</p>
STEAMBOAT MOUNTAIN (proposed expansion)	Criteria 1, 2, 3	Criteria 1, 2	Yes	<p>Meets the relevance and importance criteria for wildlife, cultural values of national significance, natural systems, unique habitat features found nowhere else in the Field Office Administrative Area, and values needing special management emphasis to be effectively managed.</p> <p>Includes the highest concentration and overlap of unique habitat features, natural systems, and cultural values. These include a portion of the sand dunes stabilized by the basin big sagebrush/lemon scurfpea plant community and the Native American respected places of Indian Gap and portions of the Indian Gap Trail.</p>

